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# ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

## DIVISION OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES

### NEWS RELEASE



*Cora Campbell, Commissioner*  
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Sitka Area Office  
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Time: 11:00 a.m.

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#### **2012 NORTHERN SOUTHEAST INSIDE (NSEI) SUBDISTRICT SABLEFISH FISHERY ANNUAL HARVEST OBJECTIVE ANNOUNCEMENT**

The 2012 NSEI Subdistrict commercial sablefish fishery annual harvest objective (AHO) is 975,000 round pounds. There are 79 valid Commercial Fisheries Entry Commission (CFEC) permits for this fishery, four less than in 2011; therefore the individual equal quota share (EQS) will be 12,342 round pounds (a 16% increase from the 2011 EQS of 10,602 round pounds). The AHO is based on the sablefish acceptable biological catch (ABC) with decrements made for sablefish mortality in other fisheries.

The fishery opens by regulation at 8:00 a.m., August 15, 2012 and will close at 12:00 noon November 15, 2012. Permit holders should have received a letter detailing any legal overage or underage incurred during the 2011 fishing season (up to 5% of the 2011 EQS) and a permit holder's 2012 personal quota share (PQS) will be adjusted based on this amount. Permit holders who did not receive that letter should contact Kamala Carroll at (907) 747-6688.

NSEI sablefish abundance has historically been estimated with a mark-recapture project. During 2011 the tagging event did not occur due to mechanical failure of the contracted survey vessel. In the absence of a tagging event, sablefish abundance could not be estimated using 2011 mark-recapture data. Instead, exploitable sablefish abundance (numbers of fish) in 2011 was assumed to be the same as 2010 and exploitable biomass for 2012 was forecast using methods similar to those employed in previous years. The ABC increased 11% in 2012 (1,160,674 round pounds) relative to the 2011 ABC (1,046,873 round pounds). The increase in 2012 ABC from the 2011 level was due primarily to updated sablefish length, age, and maturity data used in the harvest rate calculation and biomass forecast, and minor refinements in calculation methodology. The  $F_{50\%}$  biological reference point (BRP) was used for calculating the ABC in 2012, resulting in a harvest rate of 7.5%.

#### **2012 Survey Activities**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) conducted a sablefish tagging event in the NSEI Subdistrict using the ADF&G vessel, *R/V Medeia*, from May 22–June 11, 2012. Sablefish were captured using pot gear, tagged, and released. Tagged fish will be recovered in the 2012 ADF&G longline survey and 2012 commercial fishery. The resultant data will be used to calculate a biomass estimate and set the 2013 NSEI Subdistrict commercial sablefish AHO.

The 2012 ADF&G longline survey is scheduled for July 24–August 1, 2012. Data from the 2012 longline survey will be used to obtain current size, age, and sexual maturity information for the 2013 stock assessment. Beginning in 2010, in an effort to reduce ADF&G longline survey removals, ADF&G has

allowed permit holders to harvest their EQS during the survey. Despite the widespread advertisement of this program to the industry via news releases, communication with the regional vessel owners associations and public meetings, only three permit holders chose to take advantage of this opportunity during the 2012 longline survey. In an effort to continue to reduce survey removals, ADF&G intends to continue this program beyond 2012 and encourages permit holders to harvest their EQS during future longline surveys. In March 2012, the Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted a proposal that will streamline the process for permit holders to participate in the longline surveys [5 AAC 28.110(c)]. Please contact Kristen Green at (907) 747-6688 for more information about participating in this program in 2013.

### **Registration and Logbook Requirements**

Fishermen must register prior to fishing and are required to keep a logbook during the fishery. Registration forms and logbooks will be available at ADF&G offices in Southeast Alaska beginning July 16, 2012. Completed logbook pages must be attached to the ADF&G copy of the fish ticket at the time of delivery. Confidential ADF&G envelopes for logbook pages may be requested when registering.

When registering for the fishery, fishermen will be given a PQS tracking form stating their 2012 PQS. This form is to be used to record the total round landed weight of each delivery. Each permit holder must, upon request, provide the buyer with the total round weight of sablefish the permit holder has landed to date. ADF&G also requests that the completed PQS tracking form is submitted with the final fish ticket of the season for that permit.

Logbooks must include, by set, the date and time gear is set and retrieved, specific location of harvest by latitude and longitude for start and ending positions, hook spacing, amount of gear (number of hooks or skates) used, depth of set, estimated weight of the target species, and the estimated weight of bycatch by species. Indicate for each set if the target species was sablefish or halibut and if there was any lost gear. A permit holder must retain all visibly injured or dead sablefish. Sablefish that are not visibly injured or dead may be released unharmed, and the permit holder must record in the logbook, by set, the number of live sablefish released. Record discard reason, e.g. fish are small, PQS has been met [5 AAC 28.170(f)].

### **Tagged Sablefish**

Fishermen are requested to watch for tagged sablefish. Please record tag number(s) in the logbook next to the appropriate set and attach tag(s) directly in the log next to the specific set information. All tags returned will receive a reward. Tag rewards include a hat and entry into an annual drawing for one \$1,000, two \$500, and three \$250 cash rewards. To qualify for entry in the annual drawing, ADF&G requires the following information: the tag, set location (latitude and longitude), date of capture of the fish, and the name and address of the person recovering the tag.

### **Fish Ticket Requirements**

Landed weights must be recorded on an ADF&G fish ticket at the time of delivery. If a fisherman delivers fish in the round, the total round weight delivered must be recorded on the fish ticket. If a fisherman delivers dressed fish, the fish ticket must include the total landed dressed weight as well as the round weight equivalent, determined by using the standard 0.63 conversion rate. There is a 2% allowance for ice and slime. A fish ticket with landed weight must be completed prior to the resumption of fishing and each permit holder must have onboard copies of all NSEI fish tickets from the current season as well as their updated PQS tracking form. Fishermen are reminded that a completed fish ticket must be submitted to ADF&G before fish are transported out of Alaska.

### **Sablefish Possession and Landing Requirements**

In the NSEI Subdistrict, the holder of a CFEC permit for sablefish may not retain more sablefish from the directed fishery than the annual amount of sablefish EQS specified in 5 AAC 28.170 (f). However, if a permit holder's harvest exceeds the EQS for that year, by not more than five percent, ADF&G shall reduce the permit holder's EQS for the following year by the amount of the overage. If a permit holder's harvest exceeds the permit holder's EQS by more than five percent, the proceeds from the sale of the overage in excess of five percent shall be surrendered to the state and the permit holder may be

prosecuted under AS 16.05.723. If a permit holder's harvest is less than the permit holder's EQS established for the year, ADF&G shall increase the permit holder's PQS only for the following year by the amount of the underage that does not exceed five percent of the EQS [5 AAC 28.170 (k)]. For the 2012 fishing season, five percent of the annual EQS is 617 round pounds.

### **Bycatch Allowances**

Allowable bycatch that may be legally landed on the NSEI sablefish permit is as follows:

<b>Bycatch Species</b>	<b>Allowable Bycatch Amount</b>
Demersal Shelf Rockfish (DSR)	1%
Shortraker and Rougheye rockfish	7% in aggregate
Other rockfish and thornyheads	15% in aggregate
Lingcod	0%
Pacific Cod	20%
Spiny dogfish	35%
Other groundfish	20%

Allowable bycatch is based on the ratio of round weight of the bycatch to target species (i.e. sablefish). Full retention of all rockfish, excluding thornyheads, is required.

Pacific cod in excess of bycatch limits described above may be landed on a CFEC miscellaneous finfish (M) permit. Fishermen with halibut IFQ in regulatory area 2C and a CFEC halibut permit card must retain all halibut over 32 inches in length, up to the amount of their IFQ.

### **Prohibitions**

The operator of a fishing vessel may not take sablefish in the NSEI area with sablefish from another area on board. Also, the operator of a vessel taking sablefish in the NSEI area shall unload before taking sablefish in another area [5AAC 28.170 (a) and (b)].

A vessel, or person onboard a vessel, from which commercial, subsistence, or personal use longline fishing gear was used to take fish in the NSEI or SSEI Subdistricts during the 72-hour period immediately before the start of the commercial sablefish fishery in that subdistrict, or from which that gear will be used during the 24-hour period immediately after the closure of the commercial sablefish fishery in that subdistrict, may not participate in the taking of sablefish in that subdistrict during that open sablefish fishing period. A vessel, or a person onboard a vessel, who has harvested and sold their PQS before the final day of the sablefish season in that subdistrict is exempt from the prohibition on fishing longline gear during the 24-hour period immediately following the closure of the sablefish fishery in that subdistrict. In addition, a vessel or a person on board a vessel, commercial fishing for sablefish in the NSEI Subdistrict may not operate subsistence or personal use longline gear for groundfish from that vessel until all sablefish harvested in the commercial fishery are offloaded from the vessel.

For additional information, visit the Southeast Regional Groundfish Fisheries web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=commercialbyareasoutheast.groundfish>. The most recent fishery information report can be found here: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/FedAidpdfs/FMR12-28.pdf>.

News releases web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=cfnews.main>.

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